

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A steering system release device for a motor vehicle equipped with electric power-assisted steering, the steering system release device comprising: ~~on the one hand,~~
_____ a locking mechanism acting on the that acts on a steering column or on another part of the of a steering system, and, on the other hand, in combination with the
_____ an electric assist motor for the steering system,
_____ control means a controller which ~~receive~~ receives signals from at least one vehicle status and/or initiating event detector so as to activate the electric assist motor and to rotate the steering column or translationally drive or otherwise move another part of the steering system, through the action of ~~this the~~ the electric assist motor, until a zero torque or load or a virtually zero residual torque or load has been achieved, in return for which the locking mechanism can be released,
_____ wherein the vehicle status and/or initiating event detector ~~being is~~ is a detector which detects ~~the~~ insertion of an ignition key or of a magnetic card or other means used for starting the vehicle, ~~characterized in that~~
_____ wherein the activation of the electric assist motor ~~for releasing~~ to release the locking mechanism the steering system is automatically interrupted by the ~~control means~~ controller after a predetermined time in the event that the zero or virtually zero torque or load has not been achieved after this time.
2. (Currently Amended) The steering system release device as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterized in that wherein~~ if the zero or virtually zero torque or load has not been achieved after the first predetermined time, the activation of the electric assist motor is

automatically reversed by the ~~control means~~controller after a first predetermined time in order to rotate the steering column or move another part of the steering system ~~in the~~in an opposite direction ~~to the~~to an initial direction until ~~a the~~a zero or virtually zero torque or load has been created on the locking mechanism or until another predetermined time has been reached, ~~this in the event that the zero or virtually zero torque or load has not been achieved after the first predetermined time.~~

3. (Currently Amended) The steering system release device as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the electric assist motor is not activated if ~~the~~ torque or load on the locking mechanism is zero or virtually zero at the time when release of the steering system is requested.

4. (Currently Amended) The steering system release device as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterized in that it comprises~~further comprising a warning indicator, ~~such as an indicating light, designed to warn~~that warns of the impossibility of releasing the steering system on completion of the procedures controlled by the controller~~automatic procedures.~~

5. (Currently Amended) The steering system release device as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the ~~control means receive~~controller receives a signal from a position sensor detecting the position of the steering system, ~~such as a sensor detecting the angular position of the steering column, or a sensor detecting the position of another part of the steering system, and in that these control means are designed to compare~~the controller compares the signal from said position sensor with a predetermined ~~value~~value, said predetermined value corresponding to at least one position in which the steering column or another part of the steering system is immobilized by the locking ~~mechanism and to then determine the~~mechanism, and the controller determines an initial direction of rotation in which the electric assist motor is driven.

6. (Currently Amended) The steering system release device as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterized in that the control means, which intervene wherein the controller to activate the electric assist motor as they receive and process the signals from the vehicle status and initiating event detectors and from the torque or position sensor, are~~ is formed by an electronic computer.

7. (Currently Amended) The steering system release device as claimed in claim 2, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the electric assist motor is not activated if the torque or load on the locking mechanism is zero or virtually zero at the time when release of the steering system is requested.

8. (Currently Amended) The steering system release device as claimed in claim 2, ~~characterized in that it comprises~~ further comprising a warning indicator, ~~such as an indicating light, indicator that warns designed to warn~~ of the impossibility of releasing the steering system on completion of the procedures controlled by the controller ~~automatic procedures.~~

9. (Currently Amended) The steering system release device as claimed in claim 3, ~~characterized in that it comprises~~ further comprising a warning indicator, ~~such as an indicating light, indicator that warns designed to warn~~ of the impossibility of releasing the steering system on completion of the procedures controlled by the controller ~~automatic procedures.~~

10. (Currently Amended) The steering system release device as claimed in claim 2, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the ~~control means receive~~ controller receives a signal from a position sensor detecting the position of the steering system, ~~such as a sensor detecting the angular position of the steering column, or a sensor detecting the position of another part of the steering system, and in that these control means are designed to compare~~ the controller compares the signal from said position sensor with a predetermined ~~value~~ value, said

predetermined value corresponding to at least one position in which the steering column or another part of the steering system is immobilized by the locking mechanism and to then ~~determine the mechanism, and the controller determines an~~ initial direction of rotation in which the electric assist motor is driven.

11. (Currently Amended) The steering system release device as claimed in claim 3, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the control means receive controller receives a signal from a position sensor detecting the position of the steering system, ~~such as a sensor detecting the angular position of the steering column, or a sensor detecting the position of another part of the steering system, and in that these control means are designed to compare~~ the controller compares the signal from said position sensor with a ~~predetermined value~~ value, said predetermined value corresponding to at least one position in which the steering column or another part of the steering system is immobilized by the locking mechanism and to then ~~determine the mechanism, and the controller determines an~~ initial direction of rotation in which the electric assist motor is driven.

12. (Currently Amended) The steering system release device as claimed in claim 4, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the control means receive controller receives a signal from a position sensor detecting the position of the steering system, ~~such as a sensor detecting the angular position of the steering column, or a sensor detecting the position of another part of the steering system, and in that these control means are designed to compare~~ the controller compares the signal from said position sensor with a ~~predetermined value~~ value, said predetermined value corresponding to at least one position in which the steering column or another part of the steering system is immobilized by the locking mechanism and to then ~~determine the mechanism, and the controller determines an~~ initial direction of rotation in which the electric assist motor is driven.

13. (Currently Amended) The steering system release device as claimed in claim 2, ~~characterized in that the control means, which intervene wherein the controller to activate the electric assist motor as they receive and process the signals from the vehicle status and initiating event detectors and from the torque or position sensor, are~~ is formed by an electronic computer.

14. (Currently Amended) The steering system release device as claimed in claim 3, ~~characterized in that the control means, which intervene wherein the controller to activate the electric assist motor as they receive and process the signals from the vehicle status and initiating event detectors and from the torque or position sensor, are~~ is formed by an electronic computer.

15. (Currently Amended) The steering system release device as claimed in claim 4, ~~characterized in that the control means, which intervene wherein the controller to activate the electric assist motor as they receive and process the signals from the vehicle status and initiating event detectors and from the torque or position sensor, are~~ is formed by an electronic computer.

16. (Currently Amended) The steering system release device as claimed in claim 5, ~~characterized in that the control means, which intervene wherein the controller to activate the electric assist motor as they receive and process the signals from the vehicle status and initiating event detectors and from the torque or position sensor, are~~ is formed by an electronic computer.

17. (New) The steering system release device as claimed in claim 5, wherein the position sensor is a sensor that detects the angular position of the steering column, or a sensor that detects the position of another part of the steering system.

18. (New) The steering system release device as claimed in claim 10, wherein the position sensor is a sensor that detects the angular position of the steering column, or a sensor that detects the position of another part of the steering system.

19. (New) The steering system release device as claimed in claim 11, wherein the position sensor is a sensor that detects the angular position of the steering column, or a sensor that detects the position of another part of the steering system.

20. (New) The steering system release device as claimed in claim 12, wherein the position sensor is a sensor that detects the angular position of the steering column, or a sensor that detects the position of another part of the steering system.